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ABSTRACT

Based on an influential talk by Lilian Katz on the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, and the Project Approach, this paper recounts the establishment of a community of learners, including children, teachers, parents, and teacher educators, who worked together using the Project Approach. The work represents a deliberate effort to bring children into the University of New Brunswick Faculty of Education in the context of a teacher education program to cultivate different sensibilities about teaching and learning among preservice teachers. Three projects are discussed: (1) Masks and Disguises-Exploring, Creating, Interpreting Identity; (2) Flight-From Aerodynamics to Flights of Fancy; and (3) the Saint John River-Reclaiming and Representing Our Heritage. The paper focuses on the way in which documentation evolved during the year of the project work. (Author/HTH)

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Documentation as a Forum and Showcase in an Education Faculty

Anne Hunt, Pamela Nuttall Nason, & Pam Whitty

Abstract

In 1992, Lilian Katz spoke at the University of New Brunswick about Reggio Emilia and the Project Approach. Her ideas influenced our teacher educators' educational thought and practice and resulted in the establishment of a program that encouraged the expression of knowledge and skills through the arts. This paper tells about the establishment of a community of learners, including children, teachers, parents, and teacher educators, who worked together using the Project Approach. The work represents a deliberate effort to bring children into the University of New Brunswick Faculty of Education in the context of a teacher education program to cultivate different sensibilities about teaching and learning among preservice teachers. Three projects form the basis of the discussion: (1) Masks and Disguises—Exploring, Creating, Interpreting Identity; (2) Flight—From Aerodynamics to Flights of Fancy; and (3) the Saint John River—Reclaiming and Representing Our Heritage. The work took place over the period of a year. The paper focuses on the way in which documentation evolved during that time.

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Pamela Nuttall Nason

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This paper is the story of the establishment of a community of learners, including children, teachers, parents, and university students and professors, through the Project Approach. Many voices of authority emerged as the work we are presenting progressed. Although we claim authorship, we will strive to accurately represent the contributions of the other members of our community.

Background

Across the hall from the Early Childhood Centre in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick, there is a well-appointed classroom designed for young children. It has been a research and development site for over 20 years.

The classroom also provides practical experience for undergraduates in the Faculty of Education. Hands-on experience prior to placement in an internship gives substance to the theoretical and provides opportunities for observing, planning, and evaluating their own and young children's learning.

Our classroom was empty in the fall of 1999. We had just finished a two-year Health Canada[1] project that had filled the space with parents, preschoolers, and early intervention and family resource center staff. We were looking for a project that would contribute to our education students, the teaching profession, and the community surrounding the campus.

New Brunswick, like many other parts of North America, has experienced serious cutbacks to arts programs in the public school system. In order to continue to provide music, art, and movement, classroom teachers have been pressed to include these areas that were once covered by trained specialists. Often, little support is provided and teachers feel overwhelmed. They ask, "How can the arts be addressed in an integrated curriculum?" "I have no expertise. How will I teach music, art, movement?" We wondered how we might explore these questions with our preservice education students.

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Fredericton has a scheduled professional development time for elementary school teachers each Wednesday afternoon. Children attend school in the morning and are dismissed at noon. A quick survey of Wednesday afternoon Children's Programs revealed that no one in the city was providing an "arts-based" program at this time. We asked ourselves how we might create a setting that offered this option.

Since Lilian Katz's 1992 visit to Fredericton, the powerful images from her slide presentation of the work at Reggio Emilia have influenced our work. We have been particularly focused on Katz's contention that "The major goal of education is to engage the mind of the learner, aesthetically, morally, and spiritually." Acknowledging that we are all learners, we set out to explore the possibilities of using the Project Approach to establish a program that encouraged the expression of knowledge and skills through the arts.

Getting Started

We were working under some constraints, both financial and political. The program needed to recover its costs. However, tuition ought to be comparable to existing programs in the city to attract a wide range of students. We were also aware that parents would need fairly specific information about what was happening in this "new" program to persuade them to enroll their children. This requirement, to a certain extent, would affect the "organic development" (Chard, 1992, p. 31) of the project. Ideally, topic selection should be done in conjunction with the children at the center. We, however, unabashedly chose topics that we thought would appeal to the children and that would "sell" the program.

We chose to do three 6-week projects. This schedule allowed for flexibility in case families did not want to remain involved for the entire academic year. Together we created a web of possible areas of exploration and collected a bibliography of resources, including university faculty and members of the local arts community. The topics we chose were (1) Masks and Disguises, (2) Flight, and (3) the Saint John River. Pamphlets with application forms were written and distributed, and our phone began to ring.

Working in concert, we each developed, through the documentation process, ways of displaying our learning and our perceptions of what others were learning. In the following sections, we each focus on our own learning as we became a part of this learning community.

Anne Hunt: In a Community of Children

I had attended the 100 Languages of Children display at the Montshire Museum in the summer of 1998. This powerful experience helped me to see the relationship between documentation and display. I stood for a very long time in front of the three self-portraits by Francesco, his words of reflection, and his teachers' questions and feedback in order to come to a better understanding of the importance of "the product of a child's efforts as representative of the child's current understanding of a concept or experience" (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1995, p. 224). The mounting of Francesco's work with his words and the words of the teacher allowed me, the observer, to understand what it was that Francesco learned through the reworking of his self-portrait.

Then, just prior to the opening session of our first project on Masks and Disguises, I attended the Canadian Association of Young Children conference in Montreal (October 1999). A slide presentation by the University of Vermont preschool center addressed a problem I had been anticipating. I had been wondering about continuity for the children enrolled in our program. They would be coming only once each week, and I was concerned that they might become disengaged from their work during the interval between sessions. The University of Vermont slides demonstrated a strategy for helping children to reflect on, in their case, the previous day's activities. By photographing children at work and documenting what they said about that work, then putting this information up on a bulletin board, the children had a focal point for reflecting and continuing when they arrived at school the next day.

We decided to implement this approach as a bridge for the children from week to week. As the weeks unfolded and the project developed, the power of the display to attract people grew. I watched as the

children used the display to reflect on their own learning and to learn about what other children were doing. Many different areas were being explored simultaneously in the program, and the bulletin board pulled this information together.

Parents used the display to see what was happening in this "new" after-school program. They were able to see what their child was doing in relation to the other people involved in the project. They were able to connect what was happening in the classroom with learning that was taking place at home. One mother brought in a set of sketches of different noses her daughter had done at home as she thought about creating a mask. These and other family photos were added to the display, and family stories were told.

University students and faculty used the display as an example of the investigative process. Here they could see how one learning adventure was progressing. They were able to see how specific curricular outcomes might be addressed through contextual, holistic learning.

I was using the bulletin board to inform parents and the wider community, but I was also using it to shape what the children were learning. I realized that, as the person who selected what was posted, I was in a position of power and responsibility. What I chose to place on the board and where I chose to place it emphasized specific issues and imposed specific relationships.

One particular connection was established when the children in the Masks and Disguises project went to see masks that had been created by art education students.

The education students learned from the "revisioning" of their work and continued to follow the progress of the project, volunteering to come and help on the busy and momentous day that the children created plaster masks formed on their own faces.

Our children sketched the masks and posted their sketches on the display.

They later created paperbag masks that were a response to the education students' masks.

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Part of the experience we created for the children was the opportunity to connect with the artistic community. We were fortunate to have two renowned mask creators in our area. Each of these artists had a focus, and their ideas soon emerged as the "big ideas" of our project. This emergence was not entirely coincidental. I recognize the power I exercised as the person responsible for documentation and display. George Fry is a mask maker who is concerned primarily with the transformation that takes place when one puts on a mask. George encouraged the children to think about the character they were creating for themselves as they fashioned their masks. He asked questions as the children worked. He showed sketches of the ideas that he worked through before the actual creation of the mask. And he spoke about the transformative power of the mask.

Ned Bear is a native North American mask maker who has carved many beautiful "larger than life" masks from the trees found in our forests. He is interested in the contemplative nature of the mask. Ned sees the power of the mask emerging as he works. One child asked how that felt. She said, "Do you have a complete idea before you start your mask or do you just begin carving?" Ned described the creative process as "like looking at the face from far away. I see it faintly and as I carve it seems to come closer and have more detail."

Gabrielle asked, "Do you have a complete idea before you start your mask, or does it grow while you are working?"

Ned said, "In the beginning, it is like I can see the mask way off in the distance. I see it faintly, and as I carve, it seems to come closer and have more detail."

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The children listened to these "big ideas" about contemplation and transformation. I ate them up. Here was "the beef" from my point of view. I used the display area to promote what I designated as the core of the program, an understanding of the role of the mask as an object to be contemplated or as something one puts on to become transformed into the character he or she has created. I used photos, the children's sketches, and quotes from specific interactions between children and artists to emphasize this powerful idea, and in doing so, I made the idea even more powerful.

Now the larger community could see, in passing our display, that there was some serious engagement happening. People began to stop by on a regular basis to see how the work was going. They, in turn, would become engaged in discussion, not so much about the work on display as the ideas behind the work. Process and products of this work are displayed for a much larger community on our Web site at *http://cspace.unb.ca/edfac/ecc/*.

Pam Nason: In a Community of University Students

Six women and two men from my course "Problem Solving in the Early Years" worked with Anne on the Flight Project. In the early part of the term, they

Camille

I am Ashley, sister to Camille. I live in a mansion in Florida. I swim all the time at the beach. I feel happy because I am having fun.

Sarah

I am Firetta, a Fire Goddess. I live in volcanoes in Hawaii. I protect kids from burning in house fires. I feel hot and happy. I save people from burning in fires.

Taryn

I am Sir Lancelot, a knight warrior. I live in a jungle in a little hut. I fight in wars. I fight dragons and evil people. I feel strong.

Nicolai

My name is Waterdam. I am a water god. I live in the ocean. I feel watery and wet. I run the waterfall.

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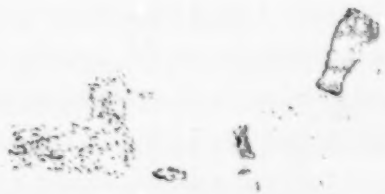
worked in three groups, to research different aspects of flight, but at the end of the project, they were collectively responsible for making the whole body of work visible in the Faculty of Education. To this end, they collected the children's work and words as well as their own professional planning, observations, and reflections, kept as "field notes."

Although I had never tried it with students before, I expected that they would find documentation to be a relatively easy task, having been, so I thought, well prepared. We had read *Engaging Children's Minds* (Katz & Chard, 1989), *The Project Approach* (Chard, 1992), and "The Rabbit Habitat—Documenting a Kindergarten Project" (Kocher, 1999); discussed the purposes of documentation; and seen how it was done in Reggio Emilia as portrayed in the film "The Amusement Park for Birds" (Forman & Gandini, 1994). Closer to home, we had seen how Anne used documentation on a weekly basis throughout the Mask Project and continued to do so in relation to the work on flight. For example, when Hilary and Emily drew a mallard with painstaking detail, Anne displayed their drawing alongside the stuffed bird on which they had modeled their representation.

Susan, a kindergarten teacher in my problem-solving course, had had this bird shipped down from her hometown as a resource for an emergent theme on bird flight. Displaying it in the hallway along with the children's work and Anne's captions had lured literally hundreds of people into a closer examination of the children's work and conversations about the process. Their interest had been a source of pride and pleasure, not only for the children but for Susan as well—another affirmation that it had been worth the trouble of getting her son to send the bird on a 200-km bus ride!

My students' own work had also been included in Anne's ongoing documentation. Prompted by slides of New Brunswick birds and Barbara Reid's wonderful plasticine illustrations in *Have You Seen Birds?* (Oppenheim & Reid, 1986), they had explored the subject matter and the media themselves to prepare for working with the children. Representing birds with plasticine had proved to be quite challenging for some of us, but the struggle—peppered with appeals for help, laughter, self-depreciation, support, and admiration—had helped to bond us. Displaying the work—everyone's work not just the ones that actually looked like birds—captured the children's interest and prompted a flurry of activity with the plasticine, which turned into a deep engagement for some children and produced stunning results. We began to see more clearly what Katz and Chard had meant by "engaging children's minds."

So, with models, lots of children's work and words, reflections on "critical incidents" and theoretical frames from problem solving, and the Project Approach at their disposal, I expected that all my students would need was a reminder to get started a week or two before the deadline for the documentation to be completed. It was not that easy. Their



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response to my "reminder" can probably best be characterized as panic. One student said she had "No idea how to do this." When I reminded them about their readings, they reminded me that not everyone had read all of the readings on documentation. Some of them had chosen, as I had allowed, readings that

had interested them more. Someone asked, "What do you mean by documentation, anyway?" When I reminded them of the part about documentation in the video "The Amusement Park for Birds," they reminded me that they hadn't all been there for that class, and in any event, they hadn't been able to attend properly because they were worried about the massive snowstorm that had forced us to cancel class

early. One young woman was in tears. Others were visibly uncomfortable or angry that I had not prepared them properly for this assignment. When I tried to reassure them that collectively they had the experience and knowledge to complete the documentation, someone wondered how the "boys" were to be involved. The two men in the course had spent comparatively little time with the children and missed a lot of classes, including this one—once again as I had allowed—to accommodate their particular circumstances.

I felt the fragile community of learners we had built over the few weeks of a university course beginning to dissolve into factions. It was clearly no longer "us," but them and me, and it looked as though a gender rift was developing. I was feeling trapped by my own flexible practice: trying to accommodate everyone's interests and particular circumstances seemed to have left the class with too little shared experience and knowledge in which to ground their collective plans for documentation. I needed to comfort the crying student and reestablish the class as a community in which everyone might claim agency and accountability, regardless of their individual differences. At the same time, I needed to make a positive and authoritative move to get on with the task at hand. The class met only once a week, and time was running out. And all of this midst my own feelings of failure at not having foreseen my students' needs more clearly from the beginning. I was also feeling not a little panic myself about what exactly I should do next.

Naming the problem as *our* problem, one which we *would* collectively solve, bought us a little thoughtful time to articulate that the problem with documentation was a problem with conceptualizing how we would organize the mountains of artifacts and information we had collected. What importance did we assign to it, and how would we convey that meaning to our audience?

I had envisioned that the documentation would show how my students' own developing professional knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings had interplayed with the children's. This was not to be. Now I can see that they were probably so immersed in their own professional struggles that stepping back

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to reflect on them was simply too much to ask at this point.

I proposed possible frames from Chard's work (1992), and we spent some time trying to categorize our recollections and reflections of the activity, the children's voices, and artifacts on a very large sheet of paper. All the time, I was aware that Whitney was not contributing. She was scribbling her own plan, which she presented to us when she was ready. Elegant and simple, Whitney's plan was collectively embraced. We could all imagine how it would look when it was finished: Starting point, the three themes that had emerged—flying machines, birds, and mythical creatures—and, bringing it all together, the mural the class had done as a whole to end the project.

The plan focused entirely on the children's work. The only concession I could see to my idea about the students documenting their own professional thought and practice was in an addendum to Whitney's plan. They would try to make explicit the connections between the children's work and the prescribed curriculum outcomes. Questions about these connections had been dogging them since the beginning of the course. How could teachers do such rich and innovative project work and still have time to meet all the required outcomes of schooling as articulated in the official Atlantic Provinces School curriculum documents? I had maintained that these outcomes did not have to be met lock-step, or even planned for. Reflecting on the work would enable us to see, and documentation would enable us to demonstrate, how these outcomes could be met through engaging work that had interdisciplinary integrity.

Getting the work organized and up on a large wall in the Faculty of Education according to Whitney's plan took place over a matter of days. It was the women who took the lead. Some of them were more deeply engaged than others, but all of them were involved. Artifacts and quotations were put up and taken down repeatedly—with not a little consternation, discussion, and, ultimately, satisfaction. I noticed that in the process the women involved seemed to have strengthened their ties. And the education faculty at large had been drawn in as they passed through—questioning, commenting, critiquing, stepping over the mountains of artifacts strewn in the hallway . . . But I was concerned that the two men were becoming marginalized. Only one of them had been there to help put the display up, but with his young son in his arms, his actual involvement had been limited. The other man was working on his practicum and found it difficult to participate in the process during the times that were convenient to the rest of the group.

By the time the documentation was up in the hall, I could see that these men had contributed relatively little. I could also see that although the women had dedicated endless hours to the documentation, the curricular connections were still weak. This weakness proved to be just the space the men needed to insert their contribution to the project. They agreed to work at superimposing the Atlantic curriculum outcomes on the work that was already displayed. In fact, they never actually did superimpose the outcomes—feeling that the display would have become too cluttered and incomprehensible to the audience. But they did comb carefully through a massive pile of curriculum documents, and they did demonstrate to the class, quite meticulously, how the various aspects of the work did indeed meet many of the Atlantic curriculum outcomes.

Their presentation went on for much longer than planned, but none of the other students wanted them to end prematurely. I concurred, intuitively recognizing that it was important for them to demonstrate the full extent of their effort and contribution. Thus, they were able to restore their place in our classroom community and affirm it as a community in which equal distribution of workload is not confounded with uniformity. As well, they had clearly paid very careful attention to the work that the women had documented—gratifying in itself—and as they produced example after example of the way in which the official curriculum outcomes had been achieved, we were collectively affirmed as a community of professionals who can teach with coherence and integrity, be responsive to our students' individual and group interests and needs, yet still meet the bureaucratic demand for common, predetermined outcomes. It was on this high note that my involvement with this project ended, but two of my students were in Pam Whitty's class, so it was not the end for them.

Pam Whitty: Reclaiming Our Places in the Greater Community

This project in both the children's and adults' learning environment was constructed, in part, to offer teacher candidates in the class Cultural Constructions of Childhood an opportunity to work directly with the children and their teacher, Anne, in the UNB Wednesday Arts program. In the mid-nineties, our university shifted from a four-year BEd to a consecutive or concurrent education requirement for graduation and licensing. Consequently, both our practicum opportunities and the early childhood concentration within our faculty have been seriously diminished for incoming teachers. This educational reality combined with the loss of funding for a teacher in our early years classroom has left us scrambling to keep the children's space occupied in an educationally and financially viable manner. The point I am making is that our Project Approach had certain constraints placed upon it from the outset. Anne and I had determined this particular topic, in a broad way, to appeal to children and families throughout the city who might have both the disposition and finances to take part in an after-school arts program. Our other constraint, if you will, is that the topic needed to fit within the framework of Cultural Constructions of Childhood. We "advertised" this topic in our brochure "The Saint John River." This program will reclaim and represent our natural and historical heritage:

- Through archived photos, drawings, paintings, and maps, we will examine the settlements along the river in the past.
- Through story, song, and dance, we will explore the importance of the river to various cultures who have lived on its banks.
- We will learn how people and especially children have worked and played on the river.
- We will develop awareness of wildlife in, on, and along the banks of our river.

It was an ambitious plan.

The history of the British in Fredericton has received significant recognition over the past two centuries, and in many ways, this Anglican Protestant Loyalist story has become the history of the city. After the American revolutionary war of 1776, several thousand subjects "loyal" to the British crown made their way to Atlantic Canada. Many were given land grants in recognition of their allegiance to the Crown. Today, local tourist attractions continue to emphasize this part of our history. Everyday throughout the summer, tourists and locals alike bear witness to the centuries-old ritual of the "redcoats" changing the guard at the Officers Barracks in the downtown military compound. More recently, and in particular with the restoration and renovation of Old Government House, a Georgian structure created by and for the British ruling class in 1826, there has been a growing recognition that there is more than one history to be told within the city of Fredericton. Anne and I wanted to begin to reclaim a few of these histories in the larger community context and within the children's program and my cultural constructions course. Thus, the community of learning expanded one more time.

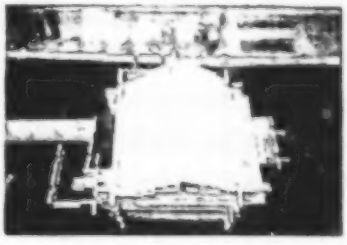
The broad aim of the cultural constructions course, which I have been teaching/learning within over the past 10 years, is to examine various ideas of what it means to be a child and how these ideas work in the lived experience of children. The process is one of both designated and emergent curriculum. The questions that permeate the course readings, discussion, and activities are "What does it mean to be a child?" and "What social, economic, political, and/or personal conditions contribute to the cultural conditions of the lives of children and their families?"

We began in the first half of the course by examining our inherent and lived ideas of childhood as well as the perspectives of various cultural and feminist theorists and cultural text. Examples of cultural texts included *Naomi's Road* (Kogawa, 1993), a fictionalized autobiography about life as experienced by a young Japanese-Canadian girl and her family in a Canadian internment camp during WW II and *Out of the Depths* (Knockwood, 1992), a series of autobiographical accounts of life in a residential native school in the mid 1950s and 1960s. Thus by the time we began this joint project with Anne, the idea of a singular notion of either childhood and history had been disrupted.

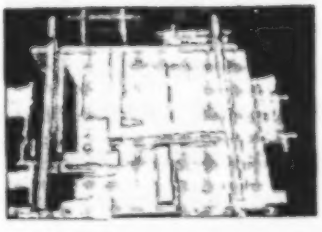
We worked with Anne and the children in the UNB Wednesday Arts programs through direct participation with the children in the program or by acting as resource support to the teacher. We formed conversational clusters in which various roles were selected by each person. In this way, we participated in the children's program directly, located resource materials, or assisted with documentation. Anne and I decided to take as our overlapping starting point a reading of *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins (1994). *My Place* is an Australian picture book that begins with a child's brief telling of an episode from the life of a piece of land in 1988. We thought it important to start in the present with the children and work back in time. The text and illustrations go back in Australian history to the time prior to 1788, when the aborginals were the only people on the land. The power of this text is the manner in which it evokes multiple histories, demonstrating that everyone has a story to tell and that every place has many stories. The visible constants on the land are natural heritage—the rising and the setting of the sun, a tree, and a river.

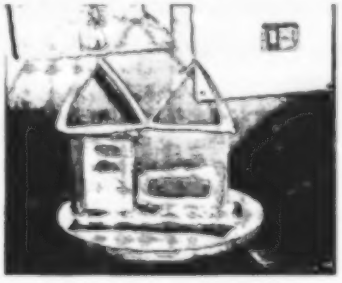
When I read this book in our cultural constructions class, I asked, "What does *My Place* evoke for you?" This question is one of the same questions Anne had asked the group of children. The verbal responses and visual mappings that my question elicited ranged from "my room is my place for now as I am from out of town" to "my place in the world" to explicit connections with the text and illustrations and the stories being told therein.

The next part of our first session was a problem-solving challenge. What ideas do you have for linking the place of the Saint John River to the histories of Fredericton? How do we include the (to us) lesser known histories of the Acadians and the Wolustoktiuk peoples? And then how do we fit these learning interests you have identified with the children's program and its educational goals? Again there were



Here are houses constructed by the children in response to Anne's question about their place.





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numerous responses, and I will say that I was fortunate to have nine people registered in this class. This small number allowed for multiple conversations, clarifications, and explorations.

Three women had ideas immediately. Bev, a potter and mother of three living along the Saint John River below Fredericton, said she would look at native histories in the area. Specifically, she looked at how First Nations peoples were represented in "our" history books. We are living on contested ground was one of the first comments she made as we began this discussion. Debbie, a child care provider and mother, wanted to interview her grandfather who lived above Fredericton and hear his stories about the river prior to the building of the Mactaquac hydroelectric plant and dam in 1968. In particular, she wanted to learn about the effect of the dam upon the lives of the people living there. Zoe, a farmer and a breeder of the Canadian horse, wanted to represent her own land. She and her husband own a large farm. She began to envision how she might represent her farm in a manner similar to that communicated in *My Place* and trace that link to the Saint John River and early days of white settlement on the tributary of the river that ran through her farm.

Kim and Mary decided to look at Acadian history. Mary was taking a degree in history and was comfortable in that field. Kim was from out of the province, had a keen interest in social studies, and was interested in learning more about the Acadians. Two other students, Emily and Susan, were working with Anne and the children in the project that Pam described earlier in this paper. They provided thoughtful and compassionate bridging to our class from this earlier project. In addition, both had extensive prior experience working and being with children. Karen and Namal, new to the Project Approach and the Reggio conception of representation, and both mothers, assisted in the children's room with ongoing activities and in our classroom with discussions about the emerging projects and the overall challenge of how we would document process and learnings.

Reflections

In writing about this process, I am struck by the way in which our classroom community brought together people who were located in a variety of communities. Three women immediately connected with the content and articulated an idea—they were able to initiate and carry out their own project within the broader visions Anne and I had articulated. They were part of the local community. Two women who had been in Pam's class knew the children, knew Anne, and knew the process, so they were able to be peer links, if you will, in the collaborative process of reflecting upon learnings and discussing the process of documentation. They were part of the early childhood educational community in the faculty. Two undergraduate women with an interest in a particular content area jumped in, found out there was little in English on the Acadians, recognized the limitations of materials available with which to learn from themselves and teach to others. They were able to engage the children in a play about the expulsion of the Acadians, which the children reenacted, rewrote, and presented to their parents—with just one week left in the program. They also brought in an archival map borrowed from the Provincial Archives that reiterated on the map itself how the river and its tributaries came to be known to the Acadians and the British through native knowledge. Although they did not capitalize on this fact in the context of this particular class, Kim subsequently returned to the map in her social studies class as a direct result of this work—a way of reclaiming the native voice through the available records. Two more women, both mothers, gave a great deal of thought to what representation meant in relation to their own children, 4 and 5 years of age. In their self-reflections, they were very clear about their own learning about the importance of multiple forms of representation, how children might better use one form than another, and how one form informs or elaborates another.

Zoe's work provided examples of how "Her Place" paralleled aspects of *My Place*. She created her presentation as a joint effort with two girls who clean her barn in exchange for riding lessons. The girls arrived in riding outfits to enhance their presentation to Anne's class. We all gained a sense of the communities Zoe was combining, as a horsewoman, farmer, and participant in our classes.

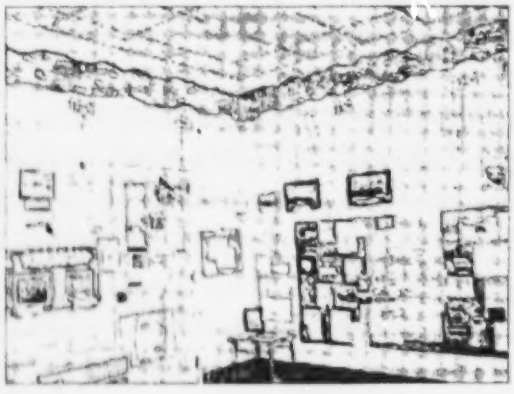
As a class, we decided to document our work using the Saint John River as a time line. This decision

came about as a graphic way to address the emerging evidence demonstrating the absence of native histories from the more readily available histories, as well as the apparent scarcity of Acadian history and artifacts. On the other hand, we were surrounded by British artifacts in terms of actual teaching/learning resources and local architecture that documented the British presence since the arrival of the Loyalists in 1776.

We began the river time line one morning with whomever from the class was available. Two of the moms brought their children, which added to the community spirit (we had heard about these children in class). We all pitched in, painting the river in various shades of blue on paper and on the windows. We began in one corner and took up over half the room with native-related stories, drawings, paintings,

and plasticine representation. Then we entered into the representations of Acadian work by all Anne's children and the two students in my class—including the Acadian arrival and their expulsions in 1755 by the British. It was not until the British arrived in the late 1700s that this dual history of "our place" became multiple.

The visual representation of the river as a time line clearly demonstrated how one cultural community had been supplanted by another and, in the case of the British arrival, how they were refugees themselves seeking political asylum. We could also see how the histories blended and how one racial group was treated differently than another in the 1960s. For example, when Debbie interviewed her grandfather about the flooding of the village of Jewett's Mills to make way for the Mactaquac hydroelectric power plant, she learned that the native burial grounds on the Snowshoe Islands were simply flooded, while the English cemetery was moved to a new burial site above the dam. We were able to make a link between the photographs she brought in of the Snowshoe Islands and one of the native stories that Bev located. Seeing this connection so graphically illustrated on our river time line prompted new questions about who is included in our official histories and who isn't. And if not, what does this exclusion mean—and how does a teacher identify and correct for omissions of cultural groups in the curricula?



Conclusion

In his book *Children Closely Observed,* Armstrong (1980) uses one child's work to demonstrate how the practice of art and the growth of understanding are inextricably interwoven: the very act of trying to make visible what one knows is what prompts the search for deeper understanding, which in turn prompts renewed efforts to represent that knowledge. The process is ongoing. We offer this paper in that spirit. As we have practiced the art of documentation with/in our Faculty of Education, we have begun to

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see new possibilities for understanding, reclaiming, and building community in the context of our teacher education program. We need now to practice some more.

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Notes

[1]Publications developed from Parenting for a Literate Community project, Health Canada grant: *Parenting for a Literate Community: A Training Program for Family Resource and Early Intervention Personnel*, Pam Nason, Anne Hunt, Pam Whitty, and Lynda Homer, 1999.

Publications born from this project are:

Training Manual/Getting Started Pamphlet, Pamela Nuttall Nason and Lynda Homer

Books for Babies, Lynda Homer

Singing & Dancing, Anne Hunt

Anticipating Text Predictable Books, Anne Hunt and Pamela Nuttall Nason

Honoring Domestic Literacies, Pamela Nuttall Nason and Anne Hunt

Folk & Fairytales, Pamela Nuttall Nason and Anne Hunt

Cultivating Language & Literate Play, Pamela Nuttall Nason and Anne Hunt

Where Does Fonix Phit?, Pamela Nuttall Nason and Anne Hunt

Connecting: Home, School & Community-based Programs, Pamela Whitty with Mollie Fry

For More Information

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